Fortunately, thanks to the extraordinary and moving generosity of thousands of British people, that hope is burning bright.

Since September, when the Daily Express first highlighted the plight of this sad generation, money has poured in for our Children of Chernobyl Appeal. Not a single day has passed when we haven't opened letters containing cash - from the pensioner's 50p piece taped to an envelope to cheques from individuals for thousands of pounds.

What began as a trickle of love from our readers grew to a torrent with donations of £70,000 from Cliff Richard, who staged a spectacular charity concert at Wembley on January 7, and £50,000 from Mohamed al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods.

The fund now stands at over £300,000, and is rising every day.

Our first consignment of aid is due to leave for Kiev in mid-April and this will include supplies of a vital drug for the treatment of leukaemia, diagnostic equipment, and a mobile scanning unit for the International Red Cross.

But there is MUCH MUCH MORE to do. Over the next months the Daily Express will be supporting many other fund-raising events and, in particular, we are proud to be associated with two star-studded rock concerts, to be staged on April 25 and 26 in Minsk and Kiev. Every penny raised will be spent helping the Children of Chernobyl, the innocent victims of this terrible tragedy.